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ABSTRACT

The negative impact of development on women is widespread in a variety of areas, across classes, in different parts of the world. The structural and historical processes that erode the power of women and shift the balance of power to men's favor, as well as shifting power to fewer and fewer men, are related to integration in a world economic system that demands a mobile labor force and the alienation of land, which is then used as a commodity rather than a resource. In earlier days it was assumed that development, following precisely the western model, would be a good thing for everybody. Women, marginal to the whole process, would of course be brought along with the men. Now, however, we are convinced that the western mode of development is fraught with problems for the developing world. Further, women are now seen both as independent and dependent variables in the development process. Women are very often victims of a development process imposed upon them by western men making western assumptions about what women do. When women are left out of the development process, change becomes lopsided and less effective; as women lose status, future positive change becomes endangered. The implications of territorial displacement of women are crucial in understanding the adverse impact of development on women. Multi-national linkages in development have drawn men away from the countryside and made the life of rural women even more difficult.
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Woman and Development:
A World System Approach

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Woman and Development:
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If this were the late 1950s there would be nothing problematic in the title, Woman and Development. It would be assumed that development, following precisely the western model, would be a good thing for everybody. Women, marginal to the whole process, would of course be brought along with the men. Men would be the real actors in bringing a country to the "take-off" stage.¹ Development would involve the assimilation of highly complex technology. In order for this to happen, attitudes of the inhabitants of "backward" areas of the world would have to change. They would have to stop acting in the traditional fashion and join the twentieth century.

If this were the late 1960s, we would finally be beginning to question the efficacy of the western model of development. We would have begun to doubt whether or not it could be applied to the less developed countries of the world. We would also begin to have the germs of doubt as to whether it would be good for everyone if it were applied. We would already have begun to see the "green revolution" make the rich richer, while the poor lost ground even faster than before.² But women would still not be a source of concern, because women were only the homemakers and breeders, those involved with the inner spheres, those who somehow provided the spiritual calm that allowed their men to seek the best paths toward a perhaps less westernized mode of development.

But by the late 1970s, problems of development are redefined. We are now convinced that the western mode of development is fraught with problems

for the developing world. Further, by examining our own history we can begin to see serious inequalities both within and between the sexes with increasing industrialization and extension of monopoly capitalism. Another variable has entered into our calculus in examining the impact of the development process. Women are no longer seen simply as a brake to the development process because we bear too many children with too little concern for controlling our fertility.

Women are now seen both as independent and dependent variables in the development process. Women are important in setting their own goals for what they view, according to their own unique circumstances, as preferable development goals. But women also are very often victims of a development process imposed upon them by western men making western assumptions about what women do. When women are left out of the development process, change becomes lopsided and less effective. Further, future positive change becomes endangered, as women lose status. Leaving women out becomes part and parcel of being incorporated into the world system, where, because of the dominance of Judaic-Christian ideology, women's place is defined as narrow and peripheral.

Despite the problems implicit in development for women, I reject the notion that somewhere in the rosy past everything for women was perfect. Instead, I am trying to systematically determine under what conditions women have the most power over their own lives and when women have the highest status.

Women's Status

I will use the definition of women's status given by Bourque and Warren:³ the degree to which women share equally with men in defining society's valued objects and the means of their attainment.

As westerners, we cannot set forth for another people what those valued objects are, nor can we, from our ethnocentric distance, decide for them the best way for them to get there. We can have important inputs to development, but only when we are sensitive to these basic ideas of self determination for each individual group.

Woman's status, her ability to define society's valued objects, depends in large part over command of resources. Three resources are available to women: 1) economic, 2) organizational, and 3) religious and ideological. All of these are resources that women can mobilize to support their points of view and to give them feelings of worth and dignity, as well as to protect them as individuals and as members of a group.

Differences in Women's Status

Development does not affect all women the same way. The impact of development varies according to: 1) the relationship of the particular setting in which the women are found to the world system, 2) the class structure of the society and the position of different women in that class structure, 3) the degree to which women have traditionally mobilized resources, and 4) the degree of territorial displacement current for women, especially through marriage.

Generally we find the more integrated a society becomes in the world economic system, the more women lose in terms of the economy, in their control of land, their ability to sell their own labor, and their control over the means of production. They lose in organization, as family structure is broken down and the kind of kinship supports against cruel or thoughtless husband are taken away by both forced and voluntary migration, and as women's

groups, primarily informal women's groups that supported women in times of their greatest travail, decline. Women also lose in terms of ideology and symbols. The more integrated a society is into the world economic system, the more integrated culture becomes into a larger ideological religious system which is male dominated. In folk religions in Latin America, South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, the rituals are controlled by women. However, as religion becomes more routinized, it becomes more male. The gods are seen as male, the priests are male, and access to religion then becomes controlled by males.

The position of each woman in class structure in her own country is indicative of differential impacts of development. We find that peasants are influenced differently than the urban middle class. Even among peasants, we cannot generalize about women. The women who are landless peasants suffer much more in the development process than those who own a substantial amount of land.⁴

The degree to which women traditionally have mobilized resources, and particularly the resources of production and organization, affords differential means to react to development. In some societies, women were not very active in agricultural production, particularly as the systems developed. In others, basic food production has been in female hands.⁵

The implications of territorial displacement of women are crucial in understanding the adverse impact of development on women. In societies where women were forced to marry outside their own villages, they were cut off from the links of kin and sisterhood that might have given them resources to impact their fates. Indeed, tragic tales are told of China in the nineteenth century, where maidens would commit suicide rather than marry the person their

parents had chosen for them. That unhappy choice, better than any set of statistics, demonstrates the hopelessness such women felt about their fate. They were physically removed from resources and power.⁶

Resources and Sex Roles

In the early days in most parts of the world, anthropologists tell us that people were hunters and gatherers. Hunting is usually a male activity and gathering a female activity, because gathering receives less travel and is thus compatible with responsibilities of child care.⁷ There is much discussion now in anthropology about which of those two functions was more important for sustenance. It has been assumed that hunting was more important than gathering, and that therefore males dominated these situations. However, anthropologists, primarily female anthropologists and female archeologists, are beginning to question this view.⁸ They point out that archeological evidence is biased toward bones, and since bones are gained from hunting, archeological evidence is biased toward men. They argue that only with the newest techniques can we begin to see the impact of gathering and female roles for sustenance. Roles were much more equal than previously recognized, but on a complimentary basis. There was a balance between the jobs of men and of women. Division of labor by sex occurred, but men were interchangeable with other men, and women were interchangeable with other women. Thus individuals were not tied to any particular work all the time.⁹ Through sharing of female work, great camaraderie was formed.

In these traditional situations, men would never do women's work, although women sometimes did men's work. The work that men did in one society may have been the work that women did in another society, so division of labor was more social than biological. Women had input into the decision

making, although in many cases men controlled land use, the important secret societies, and the final decisions in the ritual of worship.¹⁰

Colonization and Women

That traditional complimentary system gave high status to women. Imperial domination caused a major break with the past. British, French, German and Portuguese colonization in Africa, the British Raj in India, and Iberian penetration in Latin America all had in common a distinctly unequal, subordinate view of women which was then imposed on the subject culture.

Spain made its initial advances into Latin America right after they threw off the Moorish occupation. The Moors introduced to the Spanish Catholic culture the Islamic ideology of vergüenza (shame and honor), where it is men's duty to protect their women. A woman's virginity was equal to the man's honor. A man's honor depended on sexual conquest of other men's women and sexually shielding the women "belonging" to him. Youssef does an excellent job of showing the transition from Islamic to Catholic views of women.¹¹

This view of women when brought to the new world had none of the social structural balances favorable to women that was present to women in the Middle East. While often we think of women in Purdah as tremendously oppressed, their separation from men can serve as a form of protection. Often those same women secluded from male society were able to command a large number of resources. Islamic law, unlike Roman law, allowed women to inherit property. In traditional Islamic societies, women had close female friends.¹² Informal female networks and their own folk religious ideology gave women great importance in these social settings. However, none of these structures supporting women was transferred with the ideology to the new world, and in

the new setting those symbols became oppressive to women. Indeed, even in the Middle Eastern countries, the ideology which once helped women began to hinder them as the more western notions of property prevailed.¹³

In Africa, colonization occurred during the Victorian era.¹⁴ In that view, women should be in the home. Modesty was the great virtue, and women were "developed" by putting on as many clothes as possible. Because of this view of women's proper place, men were employed by the white colonizers as house servants and field workers. While neither of these were particularly pleasant jobs, that division of labor gave men technical training and access to education not available to women.

Men were encouraged in growing cash crops while women were not. Men grew cotton and cocoa and were given the technical assistance needed to develop it. Women, who have always in the African situation been in charge of subsistence agriculture, had more subsistence work to do. The men who had previously helped them in cutting and burning the land in preparation for planting had gone to more lucrative jobs where they received cash income. Men received the money, which they used for beer and recreation or plowed back into their farms. When they reinvested, they did so in the male areas of the farm, which were cash crops not usable for food. The food producers, the women, could make no improvements in land quality. Men achieved more control over the land as the western legal system of land tenure was introduced. Communal land, which assured women their right to that very important resource for production, was systematically distributed to individuals--almost always males.¹⁵ The liberal administrations of Africa, Oceania and Latin America alienated communal land and gave property titles to men, who could

then sell them to the highest bidder. Women's use rights to land were ignored in this liberal development move.¹⁶

Women and Agricultural Development

In most less developed countries, women have traditionally been producers, particularly in the agricultural area.¹⁷ They are involved in food production, processing, storage, preservation, and preparation. They care for livestock and poultry. They are vital in providing food for themselves, their children, and often their husbands. Multi-national linkages in development has drawn men away from the countryside and made the life of rural women even more difficult. Now they must in addition to the usual agricultural chores do the more physically demanding labor of clearing the land and harvesting.

Schemes imposed by development innovators do exactly the opposite for women than is intended for the countries as a whole. They make life worse. We insist on our western model of capital intensive technology and capital intensive agriculture. For decades the method of development imposed by the western world on less developed countries has been bigger and better machines. Those development strategies, which stress maximizing output through emphasis on large scale industries, to a very large degree leave out women. It is not that women are incapable innately of using such industries. It is that women in developing countries are less likely than men to be literate.

When development services, such as an extension service, goes to the rural areas, it keeps the western model in mind. In this world view, the woman's place is in the home and the man's place is in the fields. Girls are rarely taught skills which improve their farming and management capabilities.

The non-formal education given to girls emphasizes cookery, embroidery, sewing and handicrafts, while knowledge and skills of agriculture, animal husbandry, marketing, cooperatives, environmental hygiene, food preservation, family life and other subjects are rarely part of their formal schooling.¹⁸

Furthermore, the extension service is divided by sex on the western model. Men, who are marginally engaged in subsistence agriculture or only raise cash crops, are given access to credit, technology and cooperatives. Women, who are concerned with food production, are left an extension service that teaches them how to better organize their kitchen or how to bake macarons and other skills appropriate for middle-class housewives in England and the United States, but downright ludicrous for women to attempt in a developing setting.¹⁹

Not only is technology and development policy as related to agriculture detrimental to women and detrimental to production of food for local populations, it has also furthered the profit-making potential of the large international capitalist enterprises. The development of colonial prosperity depended in large degree on women and women as agriculturalists. The high profits made by companies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were due to the fact that wages could be low because the money earned by the men did not have to be the total ^{amount} needed for reproduction of the labor force. The men were subsidized by their wives in subsistence agriculture. Women grew the crops and fed the families, while the men, employed in multinational enterprises, brought in very little cash relative to what they produced.

Women, using traditional farming methods, subsidized colonial development in the mines, the plantations and even in some of the early industries. Often the low wages paid by the international corporations split families.

Men migrated from rural areas to gain cash wages. But those wages were not high enough to support their entire families, so the women remained to do the subsistence agriculture while the men went to the urban centers to make profits for the large companies.²⁰

Ignored by the so-called developmental agents, the women did not have access to technology to improve agriculture through investments. Soils were depleted and living became harder and harder to eke out of the traditional areas. When machinery and technology were introduced, they were only for the men. Often the mechanization that was introduced meant that women lost the little cash income they had access to. The hand picking and hand gathering women once did to provide them with some petty cash was now taken over by machines. Women became more and more economically dependent upon men. Lower incomes and a lower real standard of living was the impact of development on rural women.

The technology that came in was very seldom aimed at helping women with the major tasks they faced. Traditional women spend a great deal of time hauling water to use in cooking and washing. Central piped water is seen as a luxury for village use. Rainwater catchments and solar cookers to cut down on time and energy used in collecting fuel and water have never been viewed as a priority item in development technology.

Grinding mills to save the time and effort spent on pounding grain have been introduced by male petty capitalists and not communally to aid women in their work. Irene Tinker points out that "small implements such as presses, grinders, and cutters generally have been introduced to men even when the work for which they substitute traditionally have been done by women."²¹

The availability of corn grinders in Kenya, for example, clearly saves women many hours of manual effort though they also spend many hours going to the grinding center and standing in line. But why are women themselves not taught to operate these grinders? Oil presses in Nigeria, tortilla making machines in Mexico, and sago processing machines in Sarawak also are purchased and operated by men, because only men have access to credit or money.

"Historically African women have been active in provisioning of their families. This is a role which they play today although they are being restricted in their efforts to feed their families by multi-national corporations and food processing agri-business as well as by national land reform in crop programs."²² Development along the lines of the liberal U.S. model has marginalized women from their major source of income and left them without the means to provide for their families' welfare. They are made more dependent upon men.²³

Boserup demonstrates that in rural areas women became victims of development and their status declined as their productive role diminished. Development technology in rural areas, particularly in the "Green Revolution," has been detrimental to women as it has been for all poor groups in society.²⁴ That the "Green Revolution," which introduced new high yielding rice varieties, hulling machines, expensive pesticides, and fertilizers, which did indeed increase agriculture production, increased rural income inequalities and also increased women's dependence on men and women's alienation from production. It has been the poorest women who were forced out of agriculture and forced to seek non-agriculture employment.²⁵

As women are forced out of agriculture, they lose control of economic resources. Women must migrate as they are forced to seek new ways to support themselves and their families. They lose the territorial stability that

allowed them to rely on communal groups.²⁶ More settled communities, which provided kinship networks, give women emotional, social, and economic support through hard times and adversities. Those important kin groups and female networks were destroyed as a resource for women by the economic circumstances which also deprived them of a chance for access to resources.²⁷ Foreign ideology, particularly that of some missionaries who stressed the principle of male dominance within individual families, rather than extended families where complimentary roles were strong, further put women at a disadvantage. The legal norms from the developed world also reinforced the separation of women from resources.²⁸

Women and Commercial Development

When women are driven off the land, what kinds of occupations are available, what sorts of jobs can they take? In Africa, a traditional job for women has been petty trade.²⁹ In much of the cholo society in the Andes, petty trade is an important source of access to resources for women.³⁰ In addition, women petty traders maintain their own female solidarity groups and are able to see the ideological importance of women as separate actors working together.³¹ Petty trade is where women on the streets and in the markets sell goods for resale, surplus from their food production, or the crafts they make that can be used readily by their fellow women and men. Through their petty trade they provide food for their children and husbands and clothes for their children. Furthermore, petty trading allows women to combine their career and their family responsibilities. Children come with their mothers to the market and travel around the trading circuit. In Africa, even with the introduction of more stable office jobs, women still seek out the kind of

cash stake needed for petty trading, because petty trading provides the independence and flexibility that women who see themselves as whole human beings need.³²

But here again we find development impinges negatively on women. The big commercial enterprises force these traders out. The women have no income and family welfare suffers. We have seen that when mechanization provided commerce in the domestic sphere, it was men that did it through their control of tortilla makers and other mechanical devices. The traders who are taking over the markets are not only male, but often foreign nationals as well.³³

Women here are being doubly exploited by commercial development because the kind of products introduced are often inferior to the ones that women were previously selling. Women are cut off both as producers and traders of native-produced products.

Selling unneeded, inferior goods to women in the less developed countries is most notorious in the area of bottled milk for babies. It is well known among middle-class mothers in the United States that breast milk is far superior to bottled milk for infants in terms of nutritional content of the milk and digestibility for the baby. Breast milk's nutritional advantage is compounded in developed countries by the fact that few facilities for hygienic storage for milk are available and that high price of bottled or powdered milk makes it prohibitive for mothers to use in the strengths necessary for good child nutrition. Nevertheless, it is sold by the multi-national corporations through the new outlets that are replacing the traditional traders. As a result, child nutrition is declining and infant mortality in such areas is on the rise. Women again suffer. Further, as women stop breast feeding and go to bottled feeding, fertility goes up, as does the rate of induced

abortions and deaths from septic abortions. As petty trading declines women lose not only the economic resources that they mustered from their income earning capacity, but they lose as well the informal female groups that were so important in teaching each other skills and in supporting each other in times of need.

Again women are denied a chance to mobilize resources due to the imposition of mechanisms of multinational capitalism. Because of the unequal rate of development among the men in their society due to social class differences, most women can not fall back on a man to support them, even if they feel it the desirable thing to do.

Women and Urbanization

We see women moving from the rural farms, to the villages, and ultimately to the cities. This urbanization, often used to measure development, can be seen as a reversal for the situation of women, another step in removing them from the resources that allowed them to make concrete decisions over their own lives and the society that contains them.³⁴

Women very often moved to the cities following their men, although it is hard to generalize about urbanization, because the circumstances in Africa, Latin America and Asia are often very very different. In most traditional agricultural areas it is the men who move first seeking the cash income jobs, while the women remain on the land conducting the agricultural subsistence activities so necessary to supplement the male wages.³⁵ The men cannot afford to bring their families to the cities. They send back a pittance each month for their families, if indeed they do not acquire a new mistress in the city and lose their money through drink and gambling. That behavior, while

making woman's life more difficult, is quite an understandable response of men taken out of a familiar supportive environment and placed in an exploitative, alienated world.

Soon women followed the men to the cities, and the phenomenon of African women in towns and Latin American women entering the cities became more and more marked. With urbanization women lose their ability to contribute economically to the family. Life is a little easier in the cities, because often the long walks for water and fuel are not necessary. But the options for economic resources they have are very few. In Africa the main options are petty trading, making beer, and prostitution.³⁶ In Latin America the options are becoming a maid or a prostitute. Needless to say prostitution is wide spread. Women who seek to support themselves and their families become victims again as they seek ~~out for~~ resources.

Women and Industrialization

Industrialization, another form of development often associated with urbanization, also does not benefit women as much as men and leads often to the detriment of women.³⁷ Women industrial workers have been shown to be the expendable ones.³⁸ They work very hard, but only temporarily. Women have more trouble adapting to the urbanized industrial setting for four major reasons, according to Boserup. (1) They have family obligations which make them less mobile than men so they cannot move as quickly from job to job. (2) Their occupational choice is more narrowly limited by custom. There are jobs women don't even think of applying for because women have never done them in the past. (3) They usually have less education and training, and, as discussed previously, education and training of women in less developed

countries has been perverted by the western ideal of the cult of true womanhood. And (4) even without these handicaps they often face sex discrimination in recruitment and thus they are engaged in traditional occupations and face traditional obstacles in change.

Chinchilla³⁹ has shown that poor uneducated Guatemalan women, particularly in the large cities, are increasingly confined to the tertiary sector, largely as domestic servants. In Mexico, poor women who do not become servants remain in what Arizpe⁴⁰ has termed the informal sector, which includes menial and poorly paid jobs such as petty vendors or domestic servants. Even with education, Arizpe has found, women cannot move out of the cycle of poverty at the same rate as men can.

For women of higher social class, however, urbanization has some benefits.⁴¹ Again we are forced to remember the different impact of development on women by social class. The same economic factors that greatly expanded the white collar labor force in the United States, Japan and western Europe has also had its impact on the developing world. Many of the same jobs that drew north American women into the labor market are also drawing third world women--when they have the family background and education to acquire those jobs. These women become clerks, office workers, and professionals, although their percentage of the total female labor force in the third world is still much smaller than in the United States. It is projected to remain much smaller unless the world economic order is changed.⁴²

Nevertheless, for the middle class woman development has not been so traumatic as it has for the urbanized woman who cannot get jobs, who is torn from her family networks to a very large degree, and who loses the female solidarity groups that traditionally have supported her. Religious institutions have become more cold and more hierarchical, although in some urban

parishes, for example, in Latin America, we see the women again asserting themselves as religious leaders. Such status through religious symbols and organizations tends to be a class phenomenon where middle-class women gain the most within the Catholic church,⁴³ but women gain among religious sects.⁴⁴

Another phenomenon that we find affecting women in development is an increasing number of women heading households. As we have seen, it is a massive problem in the rural areas when the men leave for the mines and the factories and the women are left in charge of subsistence production. Female headed households are increasing dramatically in the urban areas, as old support systems that allowed men and women to live in a complimentary fashion decline and nothing emerges to take their place.⁴⁵

An increasing number of urban families are headed by women.⁴⁶ Even in male-female households, a minority are legal, long-term male-female relationships.⁴⁷ That suggests that the old forms supported by the old systems no longer work, and as yet nothing has been established to take their place. Women are without resources, yet cannot depend on men to provide them the resources they so desperately need. While traditionally women have been able to mobilize power indirectly through their family organization by using what Stevens calls marianismo,⁴⁸ even this indirect power of women, which is basically control by guilt, becomes less and less available in the transitory urban setting.

Urban women have low access to economic resources, as well as low access to organizations and ideology that might allow them to increase their status. Further, in the urban environment, the chances of having an input into society's valued objects and the means toward their attainment decline very rapidly. The social disorganization that is present in many rapidly urbanizing

areas of the world means that very few people have an input, and as usual women, who mobilize the least resources, have the least chance to have a say.

Conclusions

The negative impact of development on women is wide spread in a variety of areas across classes in different parts of the world. The structural and historical processes that erode the power of women and shift the balance of power to men's favor, as well as shifting power to fewer and fewer men, are related to integration in the world economic system that demands a mobile labor force and the alienation of land, which is to be used as a commodity rather than a resource.

Factors that contribute to women having less access to resources include 1) the territorial displacement of women through marriage from one group to another, 2) orthodox religions, 3) colonization, 4) capitalism with its competition for scarce resources, 5) migration, 6) industrialization, 7) male-oriented modernization strategies and 8) development according to the western model. Those factors allow the symbols of male superiority to be routinized as the one stable set of circumstances in the unstable, changing world. Male ideological dominance is supported by women's dependence on men, because women are cut off from economic resources. But the ideology of male dominance is also necessary for men to support their own feelings of helplessness in an uncontrollable and often hostile system.

Development then presents a paradox for women. By moving out of traditional areas into the urbanized industrialized sector, women have a chance at greater cash resources than they had in the traditional areas where their position has been undercut by past so-called development. Indeed, often

urban women have higher incomes than do rural women when they can find work. However, Elmendorf points out that even as they enter the cash economy, they still do not have the same opportunities that men do, nor the same freedoms and status they had in the traditional setting. "They are still in the kitchen doing their sex defined chores but experience neither the dignity nor the status they would have in the village."⁴⁹ What happened to the Mayan women that she describes happens to women all over the world. Development they cannot control forces them from an environment that, at the least, is not hostile into one which is. Particularly if the women is working or lower class, she does the same sex-typed work in the informal service sectors that she traditionally did, but she has even less control over her work and the profits from it than she previously had. Further, she is cut off from the organizational ideological supports that allow her to consider herself an effective and complete human being.

Integration into the world system, when land becomes a commodity and labor becomes proletarianized almost always serves to disadvantage women. The demands of world capitalism for an easily moved labor force, the need for the costs of reproductive labor to be borne by women to an ever-increasing degree, and the reality of women as a reserve, low paid labor force all break down traditional sources of female power and privilege and leave little to replace it.

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